

# **SHAME MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND BULLYING STATUS**

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**The major objective of this research is -**

**to investigate the extent to which shame management skills are related to children's bullying status in the following four groups -**

- **bullies**
- **victims**
- **bully/victims, and**
- **non-bully / non-victims.**

**Some individuals fail to acknowledge their shame following wrongdoing.**

**Instead they –**

- **externalize blame (H.B. Lewis, 1971; Scheff, 1987); and**
- **have retaliatory anger and hostility toward others (H.B. Lewis, 1971; Nathanson, 1992; Retzinger, 1987; Scheff, 1987).**

**What is shame management?**

**Shame management can be understood as the process we use to rationalize wrongdoing that threatens our ethical identity. Shame is what we feel when we breach a set of social and moral norms and standards. We all violate such norms (at least to some extent) at one time or another. The important question is how we rationalize our wrongdoings, and also how we manage our shame over them.**

**There are two ways of managing shame:**

- 1. adaptive; and**
- 2. maladaptive**

**ADAPTIVE ways to manage shame:**

- to admit “Yes, I have done wrong and I am ashamed of it”;**
- to take responsibility for the harm done;**
- to make amends for the harm done.**

**Other ADAPTIVE ways are the absence of**

- persistent self-critical thoughts from others’ rejection; and**
- externalizing blame or anger onto others.**

**CONSEQUENCES: Shame is discharged, reconciliation and reintegration take place. Therefore, maintaining adaptive social relationships becomes possible. This could be seen among non-bully / non-victims.**

## **MALADAPTIVE ways to manage shame:**

- 1. Internalizing others' rejection. We distance our social relationships to avoid further feelings of rejection and shame because we are struggling with these unresolved feelings already.**

**CONSEQUENCES:** Feeling rejected and alienated. Therefore, maintaining adaptive social relationships becomes difficult. This could be seen among victims.

- 2. Unacknowledging shame, externalizing blame and anger.**

**CONSEQUENCES:** Feeling of unfairness, blaming others, wanting to take revenge, and becoming alienated. Therefore, maintaining adaptive social relationships becomes difficult. This could be seen among bullies.

**In summary, shame can be managed in two ways -**

- **adaptively; and**
- **maladaptively.**

**It is adaptive when we acknowledge shame.**

**However, acknowledged shame can take a maladaptive path if we adopt a strategy of self-blame, such as internalizing others' rejection.**

**The other maladaptive strategy to manage shame (from interpersonal perspective) is when shame goes unacknowledged.**

**Table 1. Items in the instrument of ‘Management Of Shame State: Shame Acknowledgment and Shame Displacement’ (MOSS-SASD)**

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**Shame Acknowledgment items:**

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- **Would you feel ashamed of yourself? (feeling shame)**
- **Would you wish you could just hide? (hiding self from others)**
- **Would you feel like blaming yourself for what happened? (taking responsibility)**
- **Do you think that others would reject you? (internalizing others’ rejection)**
- **Would you feel like making the situation better? (making amends)**

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**Shame Displacement items:**

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- **Would you feel like blaming others for what happened? (externalizing blame)**
- **Would you be unable to decide if you were to blame? (blame perseveration)**
- **Would you feel angry at this situation? (feeling anger)**
- **Would you feel like getting back at [that student]? (retaliatory anger)**
- **Would you feel like throwing or kicking something? (displaced anger)**



### **Hypothesis 1.**

**Bullies would show lower scores on Shame Acknowledgment scales (e.g., feeling shame, making amends) but higher scores on Shame Displacement scales (e.g., externalizing blame and anger).**

### **Hypothesis 2.**

**The hypothesis for the non-bully/non-victims would be just the reverse.**

**Non-bully / non-victims would show higher scores on Shame Acknowledgment scales (e.g., feeling shame, making amends) but lower scores on Shame Displacement scales (e.g., externalizing blame and anger).**

### **Hypothesis 3.**

**Victims would show higher scores on Shame Acknowledgment scales (e.g., feeling shame, making amends) and lower scores on Shame Displacement scales (e.g., externalizing blame and anger). Indeed, victims may be excessive in practices of Shame Acknowledgment to the point of it being detrimental, particularly on internalizing others' rejection.**

### **Hypothesis 4.**

**Bully/victims would score higher on both shame Acknowledgment and Shame Displacement scales (as they are expected to show strategies adopted by bullies on one hand, and victims on the other).**

## **Grouping children according to their involvement in bullying.**

- (1) the ‘non-bully / non-victim’ group who neither bullied others nor were victims of bullying;**
- (2) the victim group who had been victimized without provocation and who had never bullied anyone;**
- (3) the bully group who had never been victimized; this means the bullying act was performed without provocation; and**
- (4) the bully/victim group who both bullied others without provocation and were bullied themselves without provocation.**

**Table 2. Percentages of Children Involved in Bullying Problems in the Australian Capital Territory Schools**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Non-bully / non-victims</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>15.06</b>
<b>Victims</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>20.91</b>
<b>Bullies</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>12.78</b>
<b>Bully/victims</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>11.13</b>
<b>Provoked bully/victims</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>38.41</b>
<b>Total number of classified children</b>	<b>1377</b>	<b>98.29</b>
<b>Missing data</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1.71</b>
<b>Total number of children participated</b>	<b>1401</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Table 3. Mean Scores and SDs for the Shame Acknowledgment Scales for All Groups of Children with F statistics from One-Way ANOVAs**

<b>Shame Acknowledgment scales</b>	<b>Non-bully/non-victim (208)</b>	<b>Victim (286)</b>	<b>Bully (176)</b>	<b>Bully/victim (149)</b>	<b><u>F</u> (3, 838)</b>
<b>Feeling shame</b>					
Mean	1.94	1.91	1.80	1.89	12.01***
SD	.18	.23	.22	.34	
<b>Hiding self</b>					
Mean	1.66	1.65	1.55	1.69	4.12**
SD	.39	.41	.43	.38	
<b>Taking responsibility</b>					
Mean	1.89	1.87	1.78	1.80	7.08***
SD	.24	.26	.31	.31	
<b>Internalizing others' rejection</b>					
Mean	1.32	1.46	1.28	1.51	15.05***
SD	.39	.42	.35	.41	
<b>Making amends</b>					
Mean	1.92	1.90	1.81	1.84	7.11***
SD	.21	.24	.31	.28	

Note. All these scales represent reverse scores over 8 scenarios ranging from 1 (no) to 2 (yes).

**Table 4. Mean Scores and SDs for the Shame Displacement Scales for All Groups of Children with F statistics from One-Way ANOVAs**

<b>Shame Displacement scales</b>	<b>Non-bully / non-victim (208)</b>	<b>Victim (286)</b>	<b>Bully (176)</b>	<b>Bully/victim (149)</b>	<b><u>F</u> (3, 838)</b>
<b>Externalizing blame</b>					
Mean	<b>1.05</b>	<b>1.09</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>4.89***</b>
SD	<b>.15</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.25</b>	<b>.26</b>	
<b>Blame perseveration</b>					
Mean	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>1.27</b>	<b>1.35</b>	<b>7.66***</b>
SD	<b>.31</b>	<b>.36</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.38</b>	
<b>Feeling angry</b>					
Mean	<b>1.36</b>	<b>1.39</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>1.56</b>	<b>7.74***</b>
SD	<b>.43</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.42</b>	<b>.41</b>	
<b>Retaliatory anger</b>					
Mean	<b>1.07</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>12.37***</b>
SD	<b>.21</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.32</b>	<b>.33</b>	
<b>Displaced anger</b>					
Mean	<b>1.08</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>1.15</b>	<b>7.36***</b>
SD	<b>.26</b>	<b>.22</b>	<b>.35</b>	<b>.34</b>	

Note. All these scales represent reverse scores over 8 scenarios ranging from 1 (no) to 2 (yes).

Table 5. Summary of the Results for Bullying Status, Shame Management and Theoretical Consequences

Bullying Status	Shame Management Skills	Consequences
Non-bully/non-victim (15%)	<p>ACKNOWLEDGE SHAME (feel shame, take responsibility, make amends)</p> <p>RESIST DISPLACEMENT OF SHAME (resist blaming others, feeling retaliatory anger and displaced anger)</p>	Shame <u>IS</u> discharged
Victim (21%)	<p>ACKNOWLEDGE SHAME (feel shame, take responsibility, make amends)</p> <p>INTERNALIZE SHAME (internalizing others' rejection – self-blame)</p>	Shame <u>IS NOT</u> discharged

Table 6. Summary of the Results for Bullying Status, Shame Management and Theoretical Consequences

Bullying Status	Shame Management Skills	Consequences
Bully (13%)	<p>RESIST SHAME ACKNOWLEDGMENT (resist feeling shame, taking responsibility, making amends)</p> <p>DISPLACE SHAME (blame others, feel retaliatory anger and displaced anger)</p>	Shame <u>IS NOT</u> discharged
Bully/victim (11%)	<p>RESIST SHAME ACKNOWLEDGMENT (resist taking responsibility and making amends)</p> <p>INTERNALIZE SHAME (internalizing others' rejection – self-blame)</p> <p>DISPLACE SHAME (blame others, feel retaliatory anger and displaced anger)</p>	Shame <u>IS NOT</u> discharged



**Table 14.2 MOSS-SASD Scale Items, Their Theoretical Concepts and Theoretical Relevances**

<b>Shame acknowledgment items</b>	<b>Theoretical concepts</b>	<b>Theoretical relevances</b>
<b>Would you feel ashamed of yourself?</b>	<b>Indicator of admission of feelings of shame.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971; Retzinger, 1996; Scheff 1987; Schneider, 1977.</b>
<b>Would you wish you could just hide?</b>	<b>Indicator of being touched by shame, a desire to avoid others and escape from interpersonal domain.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Lindsay-Hartz, de-Riverra &amp; Mascolo, 1994.</b>
<b>Would you feel like blaming yourself for what happened?</b>	<b>Indicator of willingness to take responsibility for a wrongdoing.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971; Morrison, 1986; Janoff-Bulman 1979.</b>
<b>Do you think that others would reject you?</b>	<b>Indicator of an individual being bothered by others' rejecting thoughts.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971, 1987b; Elias, 1994; Wurmser, 1981.</b>
<b>Would you feel like making the situation better?</b>	<b>Indicator of willingness to repair the harm done.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971; Wicker et al., 1983.</b>

<b>Shame displacement items</b>	<b>Theoretical concepts</b>	<b>Theoretical relevances</b>
<b>Would you feel like blaming others for what happened?</b>	<b>Indicator of externalizing blame for the harm done.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971, 1987b; Scheff, 1987; Tangney, 1990.</b>
<b>Would you be unable to decide if you were to blame?</b>	<b>Indicator of an unpleasant state of confusion or uncertainty about blameworthiness.</b>	<b>Lindsay-Hartz et al., 1994.</b>
<b>Would you feel angry at this situation?</b>	<b>Indicator of anger at the situation felt by the ashamed individual.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971; Miller, 1985.</b>
<b>Would you feel like getting back at [that student]?</b>	<b>Indicator of retaliatory anger and hostility toward others.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971, 1987b; Scheff, 1987; Retzinger, 1987; Nathanson, 1987, 1992; Tangney et al., 1992a, 1992b.</b>
<b>Would you feel like throwing or kicking something?</b>	<b>Indicator of displacement of anger on someone or something which is not related to the source of anger.</b>	<b>Lewis, 1971.</b>

## **Bullying Scenarios**

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- 1     Imagine that you are walking along the corridor at school and you see another student. You put your foot out and trip the student. Then you realize that the class teacher has just come into the corridor and saw what you did.**
  - 2     Imagine that this is lunchtime at school and you see a younger student. You grab the sweets from his/her hand. Then you realize that the class teacher saw what you did.**
  - 3     Imagine that you are in the school playground and you get your friends to ignore another student from your class. You then realize that the teacher on duty has been watching you.**
  - 4     Imagine that you are on the way home from school and see a younger student carrying something important that he/she has made at school. You knock the thing out of the child's hands. Then you realize that one of your teachers saw what you did.**
  - 5     Imagine that you have been making rude comments about a student's family. You find out that your class teacher heard what you said.**
  - 6     Imagine that a younger student is going to the canteen to buy something. You grab his/her money. You warn the student not to tell or else. Then you realize that your class teacher saw you and heard what you said.**
  - 7     Imagine that you started an argument in class with another student. Then you exclude the student from doing the class project with you. Suddenly the teacher comes in and is told what you did.**
  - 8     Imagine that you are left in the classroom alone with a student. You think that the teacher has gone and so you start teasing the student. Then you realize that the teacher is still in the classroom.**
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**Percentages of children involved / non-involved in bullying/victimization in the Australian Capital Territory schools**

	<b><u>No Bullying</u></b>	<b><u>Bullying</u></b>
<b><u>No Victimization</u></b>	<b>Non-bully / Non-victim (15%)</b>	<b>Bully (13%)</b>
<b><u>Victimization</u></b>	<b>Victim (21%)</b>	<b>Bully / Victim (11%)</b>

**Table 3. Differences in shame management strategies among children with stable bullying status across 3-years**

<b>Stable bullying status</b>	<b>1996</b>		<b>1999</b>		<b>t-value</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	
<b>Non-bully / non-victims</b>					
Shame acknowledgment	<b>2.98</b>	<b>.82</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>.79</b>	<b>.89 (ns)</b>
Shame displacement	<b>2.35</b>	<b>.85</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>.91</b>	<b>2.71**</b>
<b>Victims</b>					
Shame acknowledgment	<b>1.85</b>	<b>.74</b>	<b>1.82</b>	<b>.69</b>	<b>1.10 (ns)</b>
Shame displacement	<b>1.86</b>	<b>.80</b>	<b>1.75</b>	<b>.73</b>	<b>3.13**</b>
<b>Bullies</b>					
Shame acknowledgment	<b>1.50</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>.60</b>	<b>3.82***</b>
Shame displacement	<b>1.57</b>	<b>.61</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>4.88***</b>
<b>Bully/victims</b>					
Shame acknowledgment	<b>1.50</b>	<b>.64</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>.60</b>	<b>1.25 (ns)</b>
Shame displacement	<b>1.57</b>	<b>.61</b>	<b>1.42</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>.96 (ns)</b>

## **Major findings from the 3-year follow up**

- Stable bullies: no significant changes in either shame acknowledgment or shame displacement
- Stable non-bully / non-victims and stable victims: no significant changes in shame acknowledgment; significant decrease in shame displacement
- Stable bully/victims: significant decrease in both shame acknowledgment and shame displacement. This result suggests that bully/victims are now in an entrenched pattern of low shame acknowledgment like bullies on one hand and low shame displacement like victims on the other.